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C O N F I D E N T I A L ZAGREB 004068

SIPDIS

E.O. 12356: DECL:10/16/05

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [PHUM](#) [MOPS](#) [HR](#)

SUBJECT: CROATIAN DEMOCRATIC UNION (HDZ) CONGRESS:
UPSCALE AND UPBEAT

[1](#)1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.

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[1](#)2. SUMMARY: PRESIDENT FRANJO TUDJMAN AND HIS TEAM GOT AN ALMOST UNANIMOUS MANDATE FROM PARTY DELEGATES AT A LAVISH TWO-DAY PARTY CONGRESS IN A ZAGREB CONCERT HALL OCTOBER 14-15. TUDJMAN REAFFIRMED HIS CONSERVATIVE NATIONALIST POLICIES, BUT ANATHEMATIZED NATIONALIST EXTREMIST TOMISLAV MERCEP FROM THE CONGRESS ON THE SECOND DAY. REPEATING CALLS FOR LAW AND ORDER IN THE KRAJINA, TUDJMAN SAID CROATIA WOULD NOT GET IN THE WAY OF INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATING EFFORTS TO BRING ABOUT THE PEACEFUL REINTEGRATION OF SERB-HELD EASTERN SLAVONIA, BUT REITERATED THAT CROATIA IS PREPARED TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM BY ITSELF. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)3. TUDJMAN TOLD THE APPRECIATIVE AUDIENCE OCTOBER 14 THAT THERE WOULD BE NO DEVIATION FROM THE CENTRIST POLICIES THAT HAD CHARACTERIZED HIS GOVERNMENT. HE MADE A STRONG PLEA FOR LAW AND ORDER, CONDEMNING THE "CRIMINAL ELEMENTS" WHICH HAD VIOLATED THE LAW IN THE KRAJINA. TUDJMAN NOTED THAT CROATIA HAS BECOME A REGIONAL POWER, CREATING AN ATMOSPHERE IN WHICH THE UNITED STATES' PEACE INITIATIVE COULD OPERATE. TUDJMAN SAID CROATIA WAS WILLING TO COOPERATE WITH OTHER NATIONS AS AN INDEPENDENT STATE.

[1](#)4. ON THE SECOND DAY OF THE CONGRESS, TUDJMAN WAS RETURNED TO THE PARTY PRESIDENCY WITH 1,199 OF 1294 VOTES CAST. FONMIN GRANIC AND DEFMIN SUSAK WERE ELECTED AS PARTY VICE PRESIDENTS, ALONG WITH THREE OTHERS. THE CONGRESS ALSO ELECTED AN 80-MEMBER CENTRAL COMMITTEE. BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA FEDERATION PRESIDENT ZUBAK SPOKE ABOUT THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF THE FEDERATION FOR BOSNIA-

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HERZEGOVINA.

[1](#)5. TUDJMAN ANNOUNCED THAT THE HDZ LEADERSHIP HAD NO ROOM FOR THE LIKES OF MERCEP, IN SPITE OF HIS VALUABLE WARTIME SERVICES. MERCEP THEN WALKED OUT OF THE PARTY CONGRESS. PLAYING THE CENTRIST THEME AGAIN, TUDJMAN SAID MERCEP'S PARTY PAPER WAS NO MORE ACCEPTABLE THAN THE "FERAL TRIBUNE." COMMENT: MERCEP WAS THE COMMANDER OF A LOCAL DEFENSE UNIT DEFENDING VUKOVAR IN 1991; AFTER VUKOVAR FELL, HE WAS TRANSFERRED TO OGULIN, WHERE UNITS UNDER HIS COMMAND ARE WIDELY BELIEVED TO HAVE COMMITTED WAR CRIMES. "FERAL TRIBUNE" IS A SATIRICAL WEEKLY WELL KNOWN FOR TAKING POTSHOTS AT TUDJMAN. END COMMENT.

[1](#)6. LA BELLE JOUR: THE MOOD AT THE HDZ CONVENTION WAS UPBEAT AND FESTIVE. SECURITY WAS POLITE AND EFFICIENT; WELL-DRESSED YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN SERVED AS CONTROLS AND ESCORTS. INITIAL SPEECHES WERE MADE BY PARLIAMENTARIANS FROM NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES, WITH PRIDE OF PLACE GIVEN TO THE GERMAN CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC UNION--READ BAVARIA--AND CHRISTIAN SOCIALIST UNION, WHOSE REMARKS IN GERMAN WERE WIDELY UNDERSTOOD BY THE AUDIENCE. THE OCTOBER 14 MORNING SESSION WAS FOLLOWED BY A GOURMET BUFFET WITH MUSIC AND TWO KINDS OF WINE. ABOUT THE ONLY JARRING NOTE WAS THE IRRITATION OF THE BELGIAN AMBASSADOR, WHOSE PARKED CAR WAS REMOVED FROM THE ROADWAY AND PLACED ABOUT FIFTY FEET AWAY BY ONE OF THE ZAGREB TRAFFIC "PINCERS."

[1](#)7. COMMENT. THE HDZ PARTY CONVENTION SEEMED PLANNED TO EXHIBIT THE SELF-SATISFACTION OF VICTORS. EVEN SOME

TUDJMAN REMARKS QUESTIONING THE PATRIOTISM OF THE
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OPPOSITION STAYED CLEARLY WITHIN PREPARED PARAMETERS.
TUDJMAN AND COMPANY REAFFIRMED THEIR COMMITMENTS TO
SUCCESSFUL POLICIES AND CONFIDENTLY LOOK FORWARD TO
FURTHER SUCCESS IN THE POLLS OCTOBER 29. RECENT CHANGES
TO THE ELECTION LAW WILL ONLY HELP THEM. END COMMENT.
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